# Child Nutrition

SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE EDITION

June, 2002 / Vol. 2, No. 3

# A Commitment to Nutrition and Physical Activity

Nutrition and physical activity are part of each school day and are taught in all grades, pre-kindergarten through grade 12.

There are school policies that address mealtime scheduling, dining room atmosphere, nutrition education, physical activity, and all foods sold on school campuses and at school-sponsored events.



School health councils are formed and used to support nutrition and physical activity program goals.



Good nutrition and adequate and appropriate physical activity do not "just happen" in the home, in the community, or at school. While we cannot control what happens in the home or community, we can control what happens when children are in our care. And we can help educate parents, guardians, and the community about healthy lifestyles. This newsletter focuses on formulating policies surrounding food, nutrition, and activity in the school setting.

# How to contact us:

## Department of Education:

Jo Busha, State Director 802/828-5154 jbusha@doe.state.vt.us

Sue Clark, School Programs Coordinator 802/828-5152 sclark@doe.state.vt.us

Helen Ballard, Special Programs Coordinator 802/828-5155 hballard@doe.state.vt.us

Laurie Colgan, Child and Adult Care Food Program Coordinator 802/828-5153 lcolgan@doe.state.vt.us

Jan Standin, Program Assistant 802/828-2447 jstandin@doe.state.vt.us

### Sharon Gall,

Account Clerk 802/828-0485 sgall@doe.state.vt.us

# Office of Economic Opportunity:

USDA Commodity Foods Holly Peake 802/241-2582 hollyp@wpgatel.ahs.state.vt.us

This project has been funded with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

# - From the Director's Desk

# Educational Support Systems and the Nutrition Environment

hen we conduct a Child Nutrition Program Review, we ask about the Educational Support System. We want to know whether the school recognizes that all of the adults at school are there to support students in their academic goals and in their social, developmental, and health objectives. Frequently, schools say they have an informal process by which food service staff can bring to the attention of a teacher or the principal any concerns about a student.

While such an informal process is often perfectly adequate for Vermont's small schools, it is important for there to be a known mechanism for all school staff to report concerns they have. A policy that explicitly includes the food service staff in the referral process assures that students receive the care and support they need. Because the foodservice staff often has a different relationship with students than the teachers or administrators, they may see students in a slightly different light. Some of the concerns that food service staff may notice include possible eating disorders, health problems, social relationships, and food security issues.

The school nutrition environment can also



be a vital component of the educational support system. There is abundant research showing the connection between participation in the school breakfast program and improved test scores as well as diminished aggression, decreased absenteeism and tardiness, and reduced visits to the school nurse. Schools can increase the chances

of student success by assuring that all students have easy access to the school breakfast program. Policies should ensure that the climate in which students eat is conducive to consuming a healthy meal, and that healthy, nourishing foods are emphasized. School nutrition policies can establish standards that limit foods sold in competition with the healthy school meals, thus reducing the stigma that is sometimes associated with school meals.

Finally, the Educational Support Team can assure that a student's nutritional status is considered as they develop a plan for the student. Some children are undernourished. Even moderate undernutrition can have lasting effects on growth, development, and school performance. The Team should ask whether the student participates in the school breakfast and lunch program as one measure of nutritional adequacy. Some children have problems with overnutrition. Unhealthy eating habits can also lead to serious problems during childhood and adolescence, including iron-deficiency anemia, obesity and unsafe weight loss methods. A school nutrition environment, supported by a comprehensive nutrition policy, that encourages healthy attitudes and behaviors is a vital part of an educational support system that nurtures students and improves their chances for success.

- Jo Busha, State Director

# - Sending a Consistent Message

ne of the basic principles of raising young children is to be consistent about rules and consequences. It is also, for many people, one of the hardest principles to apply. In the rush and stress of a busy day, we can become forgetful about necessary follow-through.

Consistency is also one of the principles of a good policy regarding the nutrition environment in a school setting. We need to provide a consistent message about what we want students to know and do in terms of what they eat and how they engage in physical activity.

### What Gets in the Way?

Studies show that good eating habits develop when:

- Consistent messages are conveyed about what makes up a healthy diet, about positive eating habits, and about personal responsibility.
- Children are given a wide variety of foods to choose from with a strong emphasis on healthful, fresh and low-fat foods.
- Food is served in a welcoming, relaxed and accepting atmosphere that respects individual needs and preferences.
- Adults provide positive role models for healthy eating.
- ► The food service program is seen as an integral part of the total school program.

Most people would agree with these points. And they can be included in a nutrition policy. However, many schools do not have a policy regarding the nutrition environment. Or if there is a policy, it is not consistently implemented or perhaps not implemented at all. And this is not necessarily by design. Often it is simply due to just too many conflicting demands on school administrators, teachers, support staff, and food service staff.

Contradictory messages. It is confusing and counterproductive for students to learn in the classroom about the health problems caused by poor nutrition, then, in the hallway on the way to the school cafeteria, walk by the soda machines

and the chocolate bars being sold by the student council. Or to forbid soda in schools for children, but allow teachers to have it. Or to teach nutrition, then not provide adequate time for breakfast and/or lunch. Likewise, we convey a contradictory message if we teach about the importance of regular physical activity, then do away with recess and/or physical education classes.

Emphasis on academics. One of the issues that always arises in relation to less time for lunch and reduction in opportunities for physical activity is the increasing emphasis on academic performance. With the recent passage of the No Child Left Behind Act at the federal level, pressure on schools regarding student achievement is even greater.

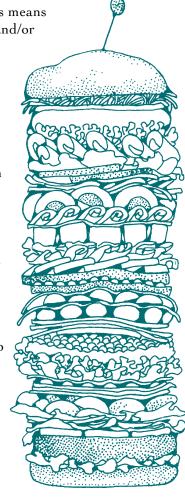
The ever-increasing emphasis on test scores puts school boards, school administrators, teachers, and support staff in a difficult position.

The immediate reaction tends to be

"increased class time." This means either a longer school day and/or more time on "academic" subjects and less (or no)

time on subjects and activities that are considered "non-academic."

Financial issues. In an article he wrote for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Erik W. Robelen states that "Commercial interests are gaining an ever-expanding presence in public schools.... Marketers have gown increasingly aware of children's tremendous buying power and have found creative ways to tap into what was once considered the last stronghold from advertising and commercialism: the school house. In some cases. school officials themselves are seeking lucrative deals



to bring in more resources...in response to budgetary shortfalls."

Soda contracts with schools is one of the newer forms of commercialism in schools. And it is a topic that gener-

ates a lot of controversy. On the one hand, exclusive contracts can generate a large amount of cash for a school or school district. On the other hand, making soda available makes it possible for students to choose



that item over healthier items. In fact, sometimes soda and/or sugary juice drinks are the only choices when the cafeteria is not open.

### **Education Policies**

Study after study shows that good nutrition is not only vital to good health, but also to improved cognitive skills and behavior. Regular physical activity supports physical health and has also been shown to promote emotional and psychological health. Efforts geared toward building a strong foundation for children's physical and emotional health will make learning easier for them. It seems reasonable that academic success will follow. Thoughtful, carefully crafted education policies can be a starting point for assuring that students are not short-changed in meeting their needs for good nutrition and regular physical activity.

**Definition.** In the publication *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn,* (National Association of State Boards of Education) education policies are described as "...official statements of vision and judgment that address the needs of a state, district, or school. Policies, and the process used to develop or revise them, are valuable for providing leadership, commitment, support, direction, guidance, institutionalization, public engagement, accountability, and legal protection."

Limitations. It is important to understand that policies have limitations. For example, just having a policy does not guarantee it will be implemented or supported. When policies are developed and imposed with little or no discussion, there is likely to be little or no buy-in by all parties. One way to help assure that policies are embraced and supported is to get input from students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board, and so on. This can be accomplished by making policy development part of the of the action planning as described in the previous edition of this newsletter series.

### References

Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment Kit, USDA in conjunction with several other organizations, 2001.

Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn, Part I: Physical Activity, Healthy Eating, and Tobacco Use Prevention, National Association of School Boards or Education, March 2000.

"Nutrition and the Health of Young People Fact Sheet," National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Adolescent and School Health, 12/7/01

"Physical Activity and the Health of Young People Fact Sheet," National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Adolescent and School Health, 12/7/01

"Prevalence of Obese Children May Mean Shorter Life Expectancy Than Parents," NewsRx.com February 6, 2002

"Promoting Lifelong Healthy Eating," National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Adolescent and School Health, 12/7/01

### The Policy Development Process\*

ccording to the National Association of State Boards of Education in the publication *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn,* there are five common tasks involved in developing policies. These are outlined in the following paragraphs:

**Task 1: Lay the groundwork.** This involves clarifying the need for a policy and outlining the objectives that will be met by the policy. If there are other policies in place, review them for points to build on or things to avoid. Collect information from a wide variety of sources, both in school and outside of school. Becoming familiar with the political dynamics surrounding this policy will help in future tasks related to the policy. Do not expect quick or easy victories.

**Task 2: Build awareness and support.** Involve those affected by the policy as well as other youth-serving agencies in the community. It may also be appropriate to involve representatives from other community groups. Develop strategies for communicating with others and responding to critics.

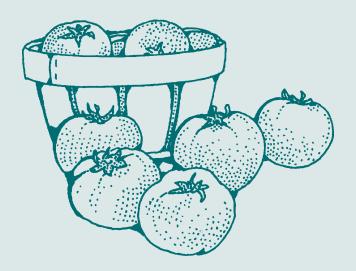
**Task 3: Draft the policy.** Once the general intent and content of the policy have been determined, bring the proposal to the attention of the decision-making body. Be prepared to answer questions. Study sessions may be needed to help stay focused on the "big picture." Once agreement is reached, draft the policy language and conduct public hearings if needed. Spending enough time for this part of the process can help things move along more smoothly later on.

**Task 4: Adopt the policy.** Present the final draft to the policymaking body and provide support upon request.

### **Task Five: Administer the Policy**

- Implement the policy.
- ► Implement a proactive communications plan.
- ► Maintain the effort after the initial push for implementation.

\*Additional information can be found in *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn,* Section B on policymaking.



### **Components of a Sound Nutrition Policy**

**Purpose and Goals:** A strong statement of purpose and goals provides a firm foundation for a sound policy. It justifies the policy to staff and the public, communicates policymakers' priorities, and helps guide program implementation. Schools have an important responsibility to play an active role in promoting healthy eating, for four broad reasons:

- 1. Alleviating hunger.
- 2. Ensuring the necessary foundation for learning.
- 3. Preventing premature deaths
- 4. Preventing health problems in youth.

**Nutrition Education:** A sound policy emphasizes that the primary goal of nutrition education is to influence students' actual eating behaviors and not just to teach facts about foods. Schools can support nutrition education by making sure that:



- 1. Teachers are adequately prepared with knowledge and skills to influence students' behavior as well as build their knowledge base.
- 2. Nutrition lessons taught in family and consumer sciences and health classes are reinforced and supported by infusing them into other subjects.
- 3. School staff serve as role models by providing school site health programs for staff and encouraging participation.
- 4. Food is not used as an incentive: either providing it as a reward or withholding it as punishment.

**The Food Service Program:** A policy governing the food service program needs to go beyond administrative details and clearly lay out the results expected. The school food service program needs to be an integral part of the overall school experience and help to reinforce students' adoption of healthy eating habits. Schools can support the food service program by assuring that:

- 1. Breakfast and lunch are available and easily accessible and students are encouraged to participate.
- 2. Students are offered a variety of healthy choices.
- 3. Food service staff are well qualified and participate in professional development.
- 4. School dining areas are safe and pleasant.

**Other Food Choices at School:** Policies that are intended to promote healthy eating need to address all food and beverages sold to or served to students, including a la carte offerings in the food service program; food and beverages sold from vending machines, snack bars, and school stores; food items sold for fundraising purposes; and refreshments that are available at school parties, celebrations, and meetings. Schools can support positive eating habits by:

- 1. Making nutritious foods available as an affordable option whenever food is served or sold.
- 2. Limiting student access to snacks high in fat, sodium, or added sugar.
- 3. Minimizing competition with nutritious meals served by the school foodservice program.
- 4. Avoid vending machine contracts that include financial incentives requiring students to consume food or drink that have little nutritional value.

**Services for Nutrition-Related Health Problems:** School personnel can play a positive role in recognizing nutrition-related health problems among students, their families, and school staff, and then help them to access feeding programs, other community service, and/or appropriate medical treatment. Consequently, schools should provide nutrition services as an integral component of school health services.

### **Components of a Sound Physical Activity Policy**

**Purpose and Goals:** A strong statement of purpose and goals provides a firm foundation for a sound policy. It justifies the policy to staff and the public, communicates policymakers' priorities, and helps guide program implementation. Schools have an important responsibility to play an active role in promoting physical activity, for three reasons:

- 1. Increasing students' capacity for learning.
- 2. Promoting good physical health and development during childhood and adolescence.
- 3. Preventing premature deaths.

**Physical Education:** A sound policy emphasizes that physical education is an essential part of every student's preparation for adult life. The physical education program needs to be consistent with national standards and foster habits of lifelong, enjoyable physical activity. Schools can support physical education by making sure that:

- 1. Teachers are adequately prepared with knowledge and skills to influence students' behavior as well as build their knowledge base.
- 2. Physical education is offered daily and physical activity is an integral part of these classes.
- 3. Physical education and activity concepts covered in physical education and health lessons are reinforced and supported by infusing them into other subjects.
- 4. School staff serve as role models.
- 5. Physical activity is not used as an incentive: either offering it as a reward or withholding it as punishment (or exempting students as a reward or requiring it as punishment).

**Extracurricular Physical Activity Programs:** Schools should offer many opportunities for students to participate in enjoyable physical activity. Extracurricular physical activity programs can be vital supplements to students' education as well as adding to their health and fitness. Schools can support physical activity programs by:

- 1. Providing intramural sports as well as interscholastic sports programs.
- 2. Striking a fair balance between grades and eligibility requirements.
- 3. Hiring coaches that are qualified for the sport and the age group being coached

**Other Opportunities for Physical Activity:** All schools need to offer convenient opportunities for students and staff to participate in enjoyable physical activity, and this imperative should be included in policy. Schools can support this initiative by:

- 1. Scheduling recess daily in elementary schools.
- 2. Building partnerships between schools and communities by addressing issues of common concern, such as use of school facilities and equipment outside of school hours.
- 3. Collaborating with youth-oriented organizations to maximize resources.

Safety Guidelines: Policymakers need to send a clear message that safety and health are priority policy areas. Of particular importance is establishing and enforcing health and safety rules for students and staff, safety standards for facilities and equipment, and policies on substance abuse that address performance-enhancing drugs.

# - Program Notes

### **Serving Seconds: Yes or No?**

o you regularly serve seconds to students and/adults? If so, you may be impacting your food service budget in a negative way, because this adds to your food costs. Regularly feeding seconds to students can also contribute to the increasing problem of childhood obesity.

There are serveral ways to reduce the amount of leftovers you have:

- ► Plan for a specific number of servings to make. Base the production on participation rates for previous times you have served that particular meal or menu item.
- Use standardized recipes and portions so you get the same number of servings each time.
- Practice portion control. Use standardized serving utensils, scoops, etc. so the portion size meets minimum requirements.

Even with good planning, there may be leftovers. But they don't have to automatically be served as seconds. Some foods, such as cooked vegetables, can be saved for soups. Main dish foods, such as lasagna, can be refrigerated, then reheated and offered as a meal choice the next day. Or you may decide to freeze certain foods to serve later. Just remember to cut your planned production amounts of that day's meal so you don't end up with even more leftovers!

If you are concerned that the minimum portions outlined in the meal pattern guidelines do not provide enough food for the students you feed, be selective about the foods you serve in larger portion sizes. For example, if homemade vegetable soup is made with leftover vegetables or commodity products, this would not cost you a lot of money to offer larger portion sizes to the older students. Soup is filling and vegetable soup is a low fat, higher nutrient food that will not contribute significantly to obesity. Likewise if you make your own bread items using commodity flour, you can be more generous with these foods. For maximum nutrient density, be sure to add some whole wheat flour and "hold the spread" when serving.

A question about "serving seconds" to children who said they were still hungry was recently raised on "Mealtalk," (a listserv discussion group—see previous issue of this newsletter). The responses fell into two broad categories:

- ➤ We don't serve any seconds. (How many restaurants can you go to and get seconds?)
- ➤ We don't serve seconds on entrees (cost issues and health issues), but we offer a piece of fruit or extra vegetables if they have eaten what was on their tray.

  In other words it appears to be a local decision.

We recommend that you and your staff give careful consideration to serving seconds in your school. If you are thinking you might change your policy from what it has been, next fall would be a good time to do so. Be sure to inform the students and their parents and explain why.

### **Your Final Claim for Reimbursement**

If you have 10 or fewer operating days in the month of June, you have the option of combining May and June on one Claim for Reimbursements. If you choose to do this, please follow these procedures:

- ➤ Write at the top of the Claim Form that the claim includes May and June.
- ➤ Send in your Claim Form so that it meets the deadline for submitting a May claim. This means that the last day for submitting a combined May-June claim is July 30.



If you are submitting separate claims for May and June, these are your final deadlines:

- ► For May Claim for Reimbursement, July 30
- ► For June Claim for Reimbursements, August 29

Keep in mind, however, that the sooner you submit your claims, the sooner you are reimbursed!

### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

Last winter, School Food Service Managers and Directors were sent a memo containing USDA's new nondiscrimination statement. We are including this information in this issue of the newsletter to serve as a reminder when you are preparing materials this summer to go to parents and the general public for the new school year 2002-2003.

Long Version: In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity employer.

**Short Version:** This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

If there is room on the document, the long version should be used. It can be in smaller type than the main body of text. If the short version is used, it must be in the same size type as the rest of the document.

# Other End-of Year Matters

As the end of the school year approaches, there are many things to think about. An end-of year list probably isn't a bad idea! That way, you can be reasonably sure that you have done all you can to prevent disasters.

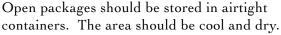
**Freezers.** If your freezers are not frostless, plan to defrost them as part of you end-of-year

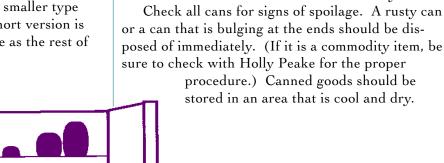
cleanup. Organize the food and do a complete inventory so you will know what you have and where it is when you come back in the fall.

If you do not have an alarm that indicates the temperature in the freezer is too high, it would be good insurance to get one. Every fall we hear one or two tales of disaster due to a freezer failing or being inadvertently unplugged. It's not much fun to clean up thawed food that is a few weeks old and it is even less fun to restock your freezer—it can do awful things to both your morale and your budget! Usually there are maintenance people at school on a regular basis throughout the summer. Try to make arrangements for them to check the freezer(s) regularly so that if there are problems, they can be dealt with before they turn into disasters!

# Dry and Canned Food Storage.

Unopened packages of dry food, such as flour, oatmeal, sugar, pasta, and the like should be stored in an area that is secure from insects and rodents.





# - Special Events

### **Seize the Opportunity!**

What? A **FREE** course at Summer Institute for Food Service? Yes, it's true! Thanks to the Dannon Company and their foodservice division, DANNON® Away from Home™ we are able to offer the **HEALTHY EDGE 2000** training workshop at no cost to participants!

### Join us on August 19 and 20.

This course is designed to assist school foodservice professionals in implementing the Dietary Guidelines for America. The course focuses on nutrition education and helping participants learn how to offer nutritious, appealing meals that satisfy children's dietary needs. This course is required for beginning level certification with ASFSA

Instructors for this course are two of the most experienced and knowledgeable past presidents of the American School Food Service Association. Beverly Lowe, RD, served as Food Service Director in the Hampton and Richmond, Virginia, school districts. She is co-founder of Nutri-Tech, Inc., a school food service consulting firm. Gene White, RD, is a Certified School Food and Nutrition Specialist with over 25 years of experience in school nutrition programs. She served as Food Service Director for the Sierra Sands Unified School District in California and has worked in Tunisia and Paraguay, helping communities establish school meals programs from the ground up. Gene is also a former State Director of Child Nutrition Programs for the California Department of Education, has been actively involved in federal and state legislation, and has testified frequently before Congress.

The class is limited to 30 people, so don't delay sending in your registration for Summer Institute. Take advantage of this opportunity to learn from the experts!

# Improving the School Nutrition Environment in Middle and High Schools

Concerned about the quality of kids' diets? Wish there were alternatives to "junk foods" in the vending machines? Looking for ways to increase the number of students who participate in the school breakfast program?

#### Then circle DECEMBER 12 on your calendar!

We are inviting schools to send a team of participants for a day-long conference that will address specific nutrition environment concerns of middle and high schools. The composition of the school team is up to the each school, but we encourage including the food service manager; the school nurse; and one or more administrators, teachers, and students.

Participants will have an opportunity to evaluate the situations in their own schools and take a look at similarities and differences among schools. However, a good portion of the day will be devoted to practical advice on how to make changes that makes a difference.

We want YOU to be there!!!

# - Bulletin Boar∂

### **Reimbursement Ouestions**

Sharon Gall is the person to call if you have questions about claims or your reimbursement checks. She works on the Finance Team in the Department of Education and can be reached at 802-828-0485.

### **Welcome Aboard, Jan!**

Jan Standin joined Child Nutrition Programs on May 6 as our new Administrative Assistant. She has many years of experience in the Department of Education, most recently with the Division of Licensing and Professional Standards. Jan has an Associate Degree and is currently working toward her Bachelors Degree in Psychology. You will talk to Jan when you call the 828-2447 number. Please say "Hi!" to Jan and join us in welcoming her to the Child Nutrition Programs "family."

National School Lunch Week
October 14-18, 2002
Theme: Stars, Stripes and School Lunch

### **Summer Institute**

August 19-23
Chester and Williston
Watch the mail for more information!

### **Mom Was Right!**

Proper handwashing is the single most effective measure in preventing and controlling disease. Please note:

- Gloves help prevent the spread of pathogens, but do not take the place of handwashing. Always wash hands before putting on gloves.
- ▶ Be sure to change gloves when changing tasks.
- ► Hand sanitizers are effective against bacteria, but not necessarily against viral and protozoan pathogens.
- ► If using hand sanitizer, wash your hands first.

Adapted from an article by Roberta Hammond, Florida Department of Health, in *Florida Spotlight on Child Nutrition*.

### **Visit our Web Site!**

www.state.vt.us/educ/nutrition

### www.missionnutrition.ca

This website from the Dietitians of Canada aims to help teach kids to eat well and be active. It is geared toward children ages 11 to 14 and their parents and teachers. The site includes lesson plans, answers to parent questions, interactive activities for students, and links and resources for educators and families.



# **-** Calen∂ar of Events

### **August 19-23, 2002**

### **Summer Institute**

- Williston Central School, Williston
- Newsbank Conference Center, Chester Registration materials will be mailed in early June. Sponsored by VT Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs

### **October 24-25, 2002**

### School Food Service Annual Fall Conference

Killington Grand Hotel and Conference Center, Killington Sponsored by VT Department of Education and Vermont School Food Service Association

Please share this newsletter with others: School Nurse, Guidance, EST Coordinator



June, 2002, Vol. 2, Issue 3

### Vermont Department of Education

Child Nutrition Programs
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620
PHONE: (802) 828-2447
FAX: (802) 828-0573
Editor: Helen Ballard
Layout: Mirabile Design
Printing: Accura Printing, Inc.

In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity employer.

ED28

Vermont Department of Education

Child Nutrition Programs 120 State Street Montpelier, VT 05620 NON-PROFIT ORG. US POSTAGE

**PAID** 

MONTPELIER, VT PERMIT NO. 297